

# The Poetical Books

## Introduction

The previous survey of the first seventeen books (Law and History), Genesis through Nehemiah, covered the whole history of the Old Testament. All the remaining books, *Poetical* and *Prophetical*, fit somewhere into the history of those seventeen books. The next section to be covered, the *Poetical*, is a much smaller section consisting of five books—Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Solomon.

Before examining them, we should note certain characteristics that all of these five books have.

The seventeen books which lie behind us are *historical*. These five poetical books are *experiential*. The seventeen historical books are concerned with a *nation*, as such. These five poetical books are concerned with *individuals*, as such. The seventeen have to do with *the Hebrew race*. These five have to do with *the human heart*. These five so-called “poetical books” are *not the only poetry* in the Old Testament Scriptures. There are stretches of unexcelled poetry in the writings of the prophets, which we shall come to later ...

We ought clearly to understand, also, that the term “poetical” refers only to their *form*. It must not be thought to imply that they are simply the product of human imagination.... These books portray real human experience, and grapple with profound problems, and express big realities. Especially to they concern themselves with the experiences of the *godly*, in the varying vicissitudes of this changeful life which is ours under the sun ...<sup>24</sup>

## Important Comparisons

### *The Place of the Poetical Books in the Old Testament*

The Old Testament divides into four major sections which relate to the nation of Israel as God's chosen people in the following manner from the standpoint of their major characteristics or focus:

1. The *Law*—relates to Israel's moral life.
2. The *Historical*—relates to Israel's national development and life.
3. The *Poetical*—relates to Israel's spiritual life.
4. The *Prophetical*—relates to Israel's future life as fulfilled in the Messiah.

### *The Relation of the Poetical Books to Each Other*

1. The Book of Job—*Blessing* through *Suffering*.
2. The Psalms—*Praise* through *Prayer*.
3. The Proverbs—*Prudence* through *Precept*.
4. Ecclesiastes—*Verity* through *Vanity*.
5. Song of Solomon—*Bliss* through *Union*.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> J. Sidlow Baxter, *Explore The Book*, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, 1960, pp. 110-111.

<sup>25</sup> Baxter, p. 13.

### ***The Periods of the Poetical in the Old Testament***

While Hebrew poetry occurred throughout Old Testament history, there were three primary periods of poetic literature.

- I. The Patriarchal period—Job (c. 2000 B.C.)
- II. The Davidic period—Psalms (c. 1000 B.C.)
- III. The Solomonic period
  - A. Song of Solomon—a young man's love
  - B. Proverbs—a middle-aged man's wisdom
  - C. Ecclesiastes—an old man's sorrow (c. 950 B.C.)<sup>26</sup>

### **Christ in the Poetical Books**

As noted previously, Christ, the Messiah, is the heart of all the Bible. With the two disciples on the Emmaus road who were so saddened and perplexed over the events of the previous days as the crucifixion, death, and reports of the resurrection, the resurrected Savior came along side and explained the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures (Luke 24:27). Then later when he appeared to the eleven and He said: "These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, than all things which are written about Me in the law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled" (Luke 24:44).

With this in mind, before launching into the overview of each of these poetical books, it would be well to get their Christological perspective. Regarding this element Geisler writes:

Whereas the *foundation* was laid for Christ in the Law and *preparation* was made for Christ in the books of History, the books of Poetry reveal the *aspiration* for Christ in the hearts of the people. They aspired to a life fulfilled in Christ in both an explicit and an implicit way, both consciously and unconsciously. The following list will serve as an overall guide to the Christ-centered aspirations of the poetical books:

- 1. Job—aspiration for *mediation* by Christ.
- 2. Psalms—aspiration for *communion* with Christ.
- 3. Proverbs—aspiration for *wisdom* in Christ.
- 4. Ecclesiastes—aspiration for ultimate *satisfaction*.
- 5. Song of Solomon—aspiration for *union* in love with Christ.<sup>27</sup>

### **Hebrew Poetry**

#### ***The Nature of Hebrew Poetry***

Hebrew poetry, so characteristic of the wisdom literature of the Old Testament (Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Solomon), is unlike English poetry which emphasizes rhyme and meter. Hebrew poetry relies on ***other characteristics*** for its impact. Parallelism is the chief characteristic of biblical poetry, but it has other features that distinguish it from the typical prose or narrative we find in the rest of Scripture. First, there a relatively greater conciseness or terseness of form, and second there is a greater use of certain types of rhetorical devices. These are parallelism, rhythm, a rich use of imagery, and figures of speech.

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<sup>26</sup> Norman L. Geisler, *A Popular survey of the Old Testament*, Baker, Grand Rapids, 1977, p. 180.

<sup>27</sup> Geisler, p. 181.

### ***The Three Kinds of Hebrew Poetry***

There are three kinds of poetry: (1) lyric poetry, which was originally accompanied by music on the lyre (the Psalms); (2) didactic poetry, which, using maxims, was designed to communicate basic principles of life (Proverbs, Ecclesiastes); (3) dramatic poetry, which used dialog to communicate its message (Job and the Song of Solomon).

### ***The Two Key Elements of Hebrew Poetry***

**Parallelism.** In contrast to English verse which manipulates sound and emphasizes rhyme and meter, Hebrew poetry repeats and rearranges thoughts rather than sounds. Parallelism refers "to the practice of balancing one thought or phrase by a corresponding thought or phrase containing approximately the same number of words, or at least a correspondence in ideas."<sup>28</sup> There are several types of parallel arrangement of thoughts, with three being basic.

1. *Synonymous*--the thought of the first line is basically repeated in different words in the second line (2:4; 3:1; 7:17).
2. *Antithetical*--the thought of the first line is emphasized by a contrasting thought in the second line (1:6; 34:10). They are often identified with "but."
3. *Synthetic*--the second line explains or further develops the idea of the first line (1:3; 95:3).
4. *Climactic*--The second line repeats with the exception of the last terms (29:1).
5. *Emblematic*--One line conveys the main point, the second line illuminates it by an image (42:1; 23:1).

**Figures of Speech.** Like the Hebrew language itself, Hebrew poetry uses vivid images, similes, metaphors, and other rhetorical devices to communicate thoughts and feelings. Some of these are as follows:

1. *Simile*: This is the simplest of all the figures of speech. A simile is a comparison between two things that resemble each other in some way (cf. Ps. 1:3-4; 5:12; 17:8; 131:2).
2. *Metaphor*: This is a comparison in which one thing is likened to another without the use of a word of comparison as in "like" or "as." In Psalm 23:1, David says, "The Lord is my Shepherd," that is, He is to me like a shepherd is to his sheep (see also 84:11; 91:4).
3. *Implication*: This occurs when there is only an implied comparison between two things in which the name of one thing is used in place of the other (cf. Ps. 22:16; Jer. 4:7).
4. *Hyperbole*: This is the use of exaggeration or over statement to stress a point (Ps. 6:6; 78:27; 107:26).
5. *Paronomasia*: This refers to the use or repetition of words that are similar in sound, but not necessarily in sense or meaning in order to achieve a certain effect. This can only be observed by those who can read the original Hebrew text. Psalm 96:10 reads, "For all the gods (kol-elohay) of the nations are idols (elilim). This latter word means *nothings*, or things of naught; so that we might render it, "The gods of the nations or imaginations."<sup>29</sup> (see also Ps. 22:16; Prov. 6:23).

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<sup>28</sup> Gleason Archer, *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*, Moody Press, Chicago, 1994, Electronic Edition, 1997, Parsons Technology, Inc.

<sup>29</sup> E. W. Bullinger, *Figures of Speech Used in the Bible*, Baker, Grand Rapids, 1898, Reprinted in 1968, p. 311.

6. *Pleonasm*: This involves the use of redundancy for the sake of emphasis. This may occur with the use of words or sentences. In Psalm 20:1 we are told, "MAY the LORD answer you in the day of trouble! May the name of the God of Jacob set you *securely* on high!" Here "name" appears to be redundant. It means *God Himself* and has more emphasis than if only the term "God" had been used.
7. *Rhetorical question*: The use of a question to confirm or deny a fact (Ps. 35:10; 56:8; 106:2).
8. *Metonymy*: This occurs where one noun is used in place of another because of some relationship or type of resemblance that different objects might bear to one another (Ps. 5:9; 18:2; 57:9; 73:9).
9. *Anthropomorphism*: The assigning of some part of the human anatomy to God's Person to convey some aspect of God's being like the eyes or ears (cf. Ps. 10:11, 14; 11:4; 18:15; 31:2).
10. *Zoomorphism*: The assigning of some part of an animal to God's Person to convey certain truths about God (cf. Ps. 17:8; 91:4).

## **JOB (Blessing Through Suffering)**

### **Author:**

While we know the title of this book obviously comes from its main character, Job, and that he was an historical person (Ezek. 14:14, 20; James 5:11), the author is unknown and there are no textual claims as to the author's identity. Commentators have suggested Job himself, Elihu, Moses, Solomon, and others.

### **Date:**

It is important to distinguish between the date of writing and of the events of the book. Regarding the date, Ryrie writes;

The date of the events in the book and the date of the writing of the book are two different matters. The events may have taken place in a patriarchal society in the second millennium B.C., around the time of Abraham. Several facts support this dating: (1) Job lived more than 140 years (42:16), a not uncommon life span during the patriarchal period; (2) the economy of Job's day, in which wealth was measured in terms of livestock (1:3), was the type that existed in this period; (3) like Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, Job was the priest of his family (1:5); (4) the absence of any reference to the nation Israel or the Mosaic Law suggests a pre-Mosaic date (before 1500 B.C.).

Three principal views exist concerning the date of writing: (1) in the patriarchal age, shortly after the events happened; (2) in the time of Solomon (950 B.C.); (3) at the time of the Exile or after, though the mention of Job by Ezekiel (Ezek. 14:14) negates such a late date. The detailed report of the speeches of Job and his friends seems to argue for the book's being written shortly after the events occurred. On the other hand, the book shares characteristics of other wisdom literature (e.g., Pss. 88, 89) written during the Solomonic age and should be regarded as a dramatic poem describing real events, rather than a verbatim report.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Charles Caldwell Ryrie, *Ryrie Study Bible, Expanded Edition*, Moody, p. 777.

### Title of the Book:

Set in the time of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph, the Book of Job derives its name from its chief character, a man called Job, who, experiencing extreme suffering (the loss of wealth, family and health), struggles with the question of why? The English name, Job, comes from the Hebrew *ályo*,b. Some believe it comes from *áa*,yab, which basically means, "to be hostile to, to be an enemy," by there is little linguistic evidence to support this.<sup>31</sup> But not all agree.

Earlier attempts to determine an etymology of the name have given way to evidence from a well-attested west Semitic name in the second millennium found in the Amarna Letters, Egyptian Execration texts, Mari, Alalakh, and Ugaritic documents. The original form of the name was *Ayyabum*, which can mean "Where is [my] father?" or possibly "no father." Either form might suggest an orphan or illegitimacy.<sup>32</sup>

### Theme and Purpose:

The book is a theodicy (a vindication of God's goodness, justice, and sovereign character in the face of the existence of suffering and evil). As such,

The book wrestles with the age-old question: Why do righteous men suffer, if God is a God of love and mercy? It clearly teaches the sovereignty of God and the need for man to acknowledge such. Job's three friends gave essentially the same answer: All suffering is due to sin. Elihu, however, declared that suffering is often the means of purifying the righteous. God's purpose, therefore, was to strip away all of Job's self-righteousness and to bring him to the place of complete trust in Him.<sup>33</sup>

Gleason Archer gives an excellent summary of the theme:

This book deals with the theoretical problem of pain and disaster in the life of the godly. It undertakes to answer the question, Why do the righteous suffer? This answer comes in a threefold form: (1) God is worthy of love even apart from the blessings He bestows; (2) God may permit suffering as a means of purifying and strengthening the soul in godliness; (3) God's thoughts and ways are moved by considerations too vast for the puny mind of man to comprehend. Even though man is unable to see the issues of life with the breadth and vision of the Almighty; nevertheless God really knows what is best for His own glory and for our ultimate good. This answer is given against the background of the stereotyped views of Job's three "comforters," Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar.<sup>34</sup>

A further purpose is certainly to demonstrate the conflict of the ages between God and Satan and to show the relationship of suffering to this conflict. In the end, it demonstrates the truth of Romans 8:28.

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<sup>31</sup> R. Laird Harris, L. Archer, Jr. Bruce K. Waltke, *Theological Word Book of the Old Testament*, Vol. 1, p. 36).

<sup>32</sup> Earlier attempts to determine an etymology of the name have given way to evidence from a well-attested west Semitic name in the second millennium found in the Amarna Letters, Egyptian Execration texts, Mari, Alalakh, and Ugaritic documents. The original form of the name was *Ayyabum*, which can mean "Where is [my] father?" or possibly "no father." Either form might suggest an orphan or illegitimacy. *Expositors Bible Commentary, Old Testament*, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, 1997, electronic media. So also Merrill F. Unger, *Unger's Commentary on the Old Testament*, Vol. 1, Moody Press, Chicago, 1981, p. 673.

<sup>33</sup> Ryrie, p. 777

<sup>34</sup> Archer, Electronic Edition.

**Key Words:**

The key words are “affliction, misery, hardship, etc.” (9 times), “righteous” or “righteousness” (20 times), but the key concept is the *sovereignty* of God.

**Key Verses: 2:3-6; 13:15; 19:25-26; 42:5-6; 42:10****Key Chapters:**

**Chapters 1-2** are key in that they introduce the reader to the source of Job’s suffering—Satan’s accusations and the affliction that fell upon Job.

**Chapters 38-42** While chapters 3-37 record the counsel of Job’s friends who raise the question, “Does God allow the innocent to suffer?” the next key chapters are chapters 38-41, God’s speech and silencing of Job, followed by Job’s repentance and restoration, chapter 42.

**Key People:**

Job, a blameless and upright man, Satan, Job’s accusers, Eliphaz, Bildad, Zopher, and Elihu, the younger and wiser of Job’s friend who sought to give Job counsel.

**Christ as seen in Job:**

Christ is seen in several ways in Job. Job acknowledges a Redeemer (19:25-27) and prays for a Mediator (9:33; 33:23). He knows he needs someone who can explain the mystery of “suffering” which is answered only in Christ Who identifies with our suffering and ultimately both answers Satan’s accusations, which are ultimately against God, and defeats him (Heb. 2:14-18; 4:15; Rom. 8:32-34).

**Outline:**

- I. The Prologue: the Disasters (Afflictions) of Job (1-2)
  - A. His Circumstances and Character (1:1-5)
  - B. His Calamities and their Source—Satan (1:6-2:10)
  - C. His Comforters (2:11-13)
- II. The Dialogues or False Comfort of the Three Friends (3:1-31:40)
  - A. First cycle of debate (3:1-14:22)
    - 1. Job’s lament (3:1-26)
    - 2. Eliphaz’ reply (4:1-5:27; and Job’s rejoinder, 6:1-7:21)
    - 3. Bildad’s reply (8:1-22; and Job’s rejoinder, 9:1-10:22)
    - 4. Zophar’s reply (11:1-20; and Job’s rejoinder, 12:1-14:22)
  - B. Second cycle of debate (15:1-21:34)
    - 1. Eliphaz’ reply (15:1-35; and Job’s rejoinder, 16:1-17:16)
    - 2. Bildad’s reply (18:1-21; and Job’s rejoinder, 19:1-29)
    - 3. Zophar’s reply (20:1-29; and Job’s rejoinder, 21:1-34)
  - C. Third cycle of debate (22:1-31:40)
    - 1. Eliphaz’ reply (22:1-30; and Job’s rejoinder, 23:1-24:25)
    - 2. Bildad’s reply (25:1-6; and Job’s rejoinder, 26:1-31:40)
- III. The Words of Elihu (32:1-37:24)
  - A. First speech: God’s instruction to man through affliction (32:1-33:33)
  - B. Second speech: God’s justice and prudence vindicated (34:1-37)



- C. Third speech: the advantages of pure and consistent piety (35:1-16)
- D. Fourth speech: God's greatness and Job's guilt in accusing God of unfairness (36:1-37:24)
- IV. God's Revelation from the Whirlwind (38:1-42:6)
  - A. The First Revelation: God's omnipotence proclaimed in creation; Job's self-condemning confession (38:1-40:5)
  - B. The Second Revelation: God's power and man's frailty; Job's humble re-response (40:6-42:6)
- V. The Epilogue: God's rebuke of the false comforters; Job's restoration and reward of a long and blessed life (42:7-17)

## PSALMS (Praise Through Prayer)

### Author:

The Book of Psalms is not only the largest book of the Bible, but it perhaps the most widely used book in Scripture because of the way it speaks to the human heart in all of our experiences in life. Again and again sighing is turned into singing through prayer and praise. For the most part, though the texts of the psalms do not designate their authors, the titles do often indicate the author of the various psalms. The following chart designates the authors of these psalms as they are found in the titles:<sup>35</sup>

Authorship of the Psalms		
David	73	Book 1, Book 2, 18, Book 3, 1, Book 4, 2; Book 5, 15
Asaph	12	Ps. 50, 73-83
Korahites	12	Ps. 42-49; 84; 86; 87; 88
Solomon	2	Ps. 72, 127
Moses	1	Ps. 90
Ethan	1	Ps. 89

### Division and Classification of the Psalms:

#### *Divisions of the Psalter*

The Psalms are really five books in one. Each of the following book division concludes with a doxology while Psalm 150 occupies the place of the doxology and forms an appropriate conclusion to the entire collection.

Epiphanius said, "The Hebrews divided the Psalter into five books so that it would be another Pentateuch." The Midrash of Psa. 1:1 states, "Moses gave the Israelites the five books of the Law, and to correspond to these David gave to them the Book of the Psalms in five books."<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Ryrie, p. 831.

<sup>36</sup> Charles L. Feinberg, *Class Notes*, Dallas Theological Seminary, p. 3, 1960's. Feinberg pointed out this quote was very ancient. The *Midrash* is a Rabbinical Commentary.

This correspondence to the Pentateuch may be seen in the following outline:<sup>37</sup>

1. Psalms about man and creation (1-41)—corresponds to Genesis.
2. Psalms about Israel and redemption (42-72)—corresponds to Exodus.
3. Psalms about worship and the Temple (73-89)—corresponds to Leviticus.
4. Psalms about our sojourn on the earth (90-106)—corresponds to Numbers.
5. Psalms about praise and the Word of God (107-150)—corresponds to Deuteronomy.

Another way of looking at the book divisions:

Book	Psalms	Author	General Content
Book I	Psalms 1-41	David	Songs of worship
Book II	Psalms 42-72	David & Korah	Hymns of petition
Book III	Psalms 73-89	Mainly Asaph	Hymns of petition
Book IV	Psalms 90-106	Mainly Anonymous	Anthems of praise
Book V	Psalms 107-150	David and Anonymous	Anthems of praise

### *Categories or Types of Psalms*

As to their types, the following illustrates a generally agreed upon set of categories:

1. **Lament** or **Petition**, either individual (Ps. 3) or communal (Ps. 44);
2. **Thanksgiving** or **Praise**, either individual (Ps. 30) or communal (Ps. 65);
3. **Trust** in God (Ps. 4);
4. **Enthronement** hymns of *Yahweh*: psalms concerning Jerusalem (Ps. 48), and royal psalms (some of which are messianic; Ps. 2, 110);
5. **Didactic** and **Wisdom** psalms (Pss. 1, 37, 119).
6. **Theme** psalms: The psalms may also be classified according to special themes as: creation (Ps. 8, 19), nature psalms (Ps. 19; 104), acrostic or memory device psalms (Ps. 111, 112, 119), the Exodus (Ps. 78), imprecation (Ps. 7), penitence (Ps. 6), pilgrim psalms (Ps. 120), and Messianic psalms, those that include prophecies about Messiah as Psalm 2, 8, 16, 22, 40, 45, 72, 110, 118.

### **Date:**

With their very broad chronological range, the wide thematic arrangement, and the many different audiences living under a variety of conditions, the psalms reflect a multitude of moods and experiences that make them extremely relevant to the reader regardless of the day in which he lives. Regarding the date of the various psalms, Archer writes:

<sup>37</sup> Geisler, pp. 195-196.



Of these, the earliest would naturally be Ps. 90, by Moses, presumably composed about 1405 B.C. The Davidic psalms would have originated between 1020 and 975 B.C.; those of Asaph from approximately the same period; Ps. 127 from the period of Solomon's reign, possibly 950. It is hard to date the descendants of Korah and the two Ezrahites who are mentioned; presumably they were pre-exilic. Of the psalms not carrying titles, some were undoubtedly Davidic (e.g., 2 and 33) and the others date from later periods all the way up to the return from exile (such as 126 and 137, the latter of which is at least as late as the Exile). No convincing evidence, however, has been offered for the dating of any of the psalms later than approximately 500 B.C.<sup>38</sup>

### **Title of the Book:**

In the Hebrew, The Book of Psalms is titled, *Tehillim* (praise) or *Sepher Tehillim* (book of praises). A shortened form is *Tillim*. Only one psalm (145) is designated *Tehillah* (praise), but praise is the heart of the psalms. The Septuagint gives the name *Psalmoi* (psalms), that is "songs or poems sung with musical accompaniment." *Psalmos* comes from *psallein*, "to pluck a stringed instrument" as an accompaniment to song.

### **Theme and Purpose:**

The psalms provide us with a message of hope and comfort through the common theme of worship. They are, in essence, an antidote to fear and complaining. through a personal response to the person and work of God. They are an expression of the worship, faith, and spiritual life of Israel. In the psalms we have a mirror of the heart of God's people recording the simple, universal human experiences of man in the light of God's person, promises, plan, and presence.

As a collection of a 150 psalms they naturally cover a great variety of feelings, circumstances and themes. This means it is difficult to make any generalizations about a theme or purpose, but it is safe to say that all the psalms embody a personal response on the part of the believer toward the goodness and grace of God. Often they include a record of the psalmist's own inner emotions of discouragement, anxiety, or thankfulness even when faced with the opposition of God's enemies or in view of God's varied providences. But whether the psalmist is occupied with a mournful or a joyous theme, he is always expressing himself as in the presence of the living God. There are a few psalms, of course, which mostly contain the thoughts and revelations of God Himself, such as Ps. 2, but these are most exceptional.<sup>39</sup>

Many of the psalms survey the Word of God, His attributes, and are Messianic in their scope in anticipation of the coming Messiah.

### **Key Word:**

In thought, *worship*, is certainly a key word as expressed in the theme above. In this regard, *praise*, which occurs some 166 times and some form of the word *bless*, *blessing*, *bless*, occurs over a 100 times in the NASB.

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<sup>38</sup> Archer, Electronic Media.

<sup>39</sup> Adapted from Archer's *Survey of the Old Testament*, Electronic Media.

**Key Verses:**

How do you list key verses in a book like psalms where nearly everyone is bound to have his or her own special verses that have been dear to their heart, but the following is a suggestion:

**1:1-3** How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, Nor stand in the path of sinners, Nor sit in the seat of scoffers! 2 But his delight is in the law of the LORD, And in His law he meditates day and night. 3 And he will be like a tree firmly planted by streams of water, Which yields its fruit in its season, And its leaf does not wither; And in whatever he does, he prospers.

**19:8-11** The precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; The commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes. 9 The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever; The judgments of the LORD are true; they are righteous altogether. 10 They are more desirable than gold, yes, than much fine gold; Sweeter also than honey and the drippings of the honeycomb. 11 Moreover, by them Your servant is warned; In keeping them there is great reward.

**19:14** Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart Be acceptable in Your sight, O LORD, my rock and my Redeemer.

**119:9-11** How can a young man keep his way pure? By keeping it according to Your word. 10 With all my heart I have sought You; Do not let me wander from Your commandments. 11 Your word I have treasured in my heart, That I may not sin against You.

**145:21** My mouth will speak the praise of the LORD; And all flesh will bless His holy name forever and ever.

**Key Chapters:**

As with the verses, so we also face difficulty in selecting key chapters, but the following are suggested. Psalm 1, 22, 23, 24; 37; 78; 100; 119; 121, and 150. Psalm 100 beautifully unites to central themes of praise and worship.

**Key People:**

Though the titles to the psalms do sometimes point to the subject or author of the psalm, like David or Korah, the text of the psalms does not. Rather, the focus seems to be more on the people of God in their worship and walk with Lord.

**Christ as seen in Psalms:**

Many of the psalms are Messianic and speak of the person and work of Christ. They fall into following categories:

1. **Typically messianic:** These psalms are less obviously messianic. The psalmist in some way is a type of Christ (cf. 34:20; 69:4, 9), but other aspects of the passage do not apply. Perhaps, in this case Jesus and the apostles were applying familiar psalmic expressions to their experiences (e.g., 109:8 in Acts 1:20).
2. **Typological-prophetic:** though the psalmist describes his own experience, the language is such that points beyond his own life and becomes historically true only in the person of Christ (22).

3. **Indirectly messianic:** when the psalm was written it referred to the house of David or a specific king, but will find its final and ultimate fulfillment only in the person of Christ (2, 45, 72).
4. **Purely prophetic:** refers directly to Christ without any reference to any other person or son of David (110).
5. **Enthronement or eschatological:** these are psalms that anticipate the coming of the Lord and the consummation of His Kingdom as fulfilled in the person of Messiah, Christ (96-99).

Specific Prophetic fulfillments applied to Christ:

Prophecy	Psalm	New Testament Passage
1. Birth	104:4	Heb. 1:7
2. Humiliation	8:4	Heb. 2:6
3. Deity	45:6	Heb. 1:8
4. Ministry	69:9	John 2:17
5. Rejection	118:22	Matt. 21:42
6. Betrayal	41:9	John 13:18
7. Crucifixion events	22	Matt. 27:39, 43, 46; Luke 23:35
8. Resurrection	2 and 16	Acts 2:27
9. Ascension	68:18	Eph. 4:8
10. Reign	102:26	Heb. 1:11

## Outline:

### **Book I: Psalms 1-41**

- Psalm 1: The Blessed Man: The Two Ways of Life Contrasted: that of Word and the World
- Psalm 2: The Messiah King: The Confederacy Against God and Christ
- Psalm 3: Quietness Amid Troubles: Protection in Danger
- Psalm 4: An Evening Prayer of Trust in God
- Psalm 5: A Morning Prayer of God's Confidence in God's Presence
- Psalm 6: A Prayer of a Soul in Deep Anguish
- Psalm 7: A Prayer for Refuge
- Psalm 8: The Glory of the Creator and Man's Dignity
- Psalm 9: A Prayer of Thanksgiving for God's Justice
- Psalm 10: A Prayer for the Overthrow of the Wicked
- Psalm 11: The Lord as a Refuge and Defense
- Psalm 12: A Prayer for Help Against Lying Tongues
- Psalm 13: A Prayer for Help in Trouble
- Psalm 14: A Description of the Folly and Wickedness of Man
- Psalm 15: A description of the Godly Man
- Psalm 16: The Lord as the Refuge of the Saints
- Psalm 17: A Prayer for Deliverance through God's Justice

- Psalm 18: A Prayer of Praise for Deliverance
- Psalm 19: God's Revelation in His Creation Work and Written Word
- Psalm 20: Prayer for Victory Over Enemies
- Psalm 21: The Lord as the Strength of the King
- Psalm 22: A Portrait of the Cross: a Psalm of Anguish and Praise
- Psalm 23: A Portrait of the Divine Shepherd: a Psalm of the Goodness of God
- Psalm 24: A Psalm of the King of Glory
- Psalm 25: An Acrostic Psalm: a Prayer for Deliverance, Guidance, and Forgiveness
- Psalm 26: The Plea of Integrity and for Redemption
- Psalm 27: A Prayer of Fearless Confidence in the Lord
- Psalm 28: Prayer for Help and Praise for its Answer: the Lord My Strength and My Shield
- Psalm 29: The Powerful Voice of God
- Psalm 30: A Prayer of Thankfulness for God's Faithfulness in a Time of Need
- Psalm 31: A Prayer of Complaint, Petition, and Praise
- Psalm 32: The Blessing of Forgiveness and Trust in God
- Psalm 33: Praise to the Lord as the Creator and Deliverer
- Psalm 34: Praise to the Lord as the Provider and Deliverer
- Psalm 35: A Prayer for Vindication and Rescue from Enemies
- Psalm 36: The Wickedness of Men Contrasted with the Loving Kindness of God
- Psalm 37: A Plea for Resting in the Lord
- Psalm 38: A Prayer for Reconciliation Acknowledging the Heavy Burden of Sin
- Psalm 39: A Prayer Acknowledging the Frailty of Man
- Psalm 40: Praise for the Joyful Experience and Expectation of Salvation
- Psalm 41: Praise for God's Blessings in Adversity

***Book II: Psalms 42-72***

- Psalms 42-43: Longing For God and Hoping in the Lord's Salvation
- Psalm 44: National Lament and Prayer for Redemption
- Psalm 45: The Wedding Song of a Son of David
- Psalm 46: God is Our Refuge and Strength
- Psalm 47: The Lord Is the Victorious King
- Psalm 48: Praise for Mount Zion, the Beautiful City
- Psalm 49: The Emptiness of Riches Without Wisdom
- Psalm 50: The Sacrifice of Thanksgiving
- Psalm 51: Confession and the Forgiveness of Sin
- Psalm 52: The Futility of Boastful Wickedness
- Psalm 53: A Portrait of the Godless
- Psalm 54: The Lord as Our Help!
- Psalm 55: The Lord Sustains the Righteous!
- Psalm 56: Trust in the Midst of Our Fears
- Psalm 57: The Exaltation of the Lord in the Midst of Alienation
- Psalm 58: The Righteous Shall Surely Be Rewarded
- Psalm 59: Prayer For Deliverance From Enemies
- Psalm 60: Prayer For Deliverance of the Nation
- Psalm 61: Prayer From a Fainting Heart
- Psalm 62: Waiting On the Lord
- Psalm 63: Thirsting God's Love
- Psalm 64: Prayer for Protection

- Psalm 65: God's Bounty for Earth and Man
- Psalm 66: Remember What God Has Done
- Psalm 67: A Call for All to Praise God
- Psalm 68: God Is a Father to the Oppressed
- Psalm 69: Prayer for Deliverance According to God's Compassion
- Psalm 70: Prayer for the Poor and Needy
- Psalm 71: Prayer for the Aged
- Psalm 72: The Glorious Reign of Messiah

***Book III: Psalms 73-89***

- Psalm 73: Prayer for an Eternal Perspective
- Psalm 74: Plea for Help in a Time of National Adversity
- Psalm 75: Justice Is the Lord's
- Psalm 76: The Victorious Power of the God of Jacob
- Psalm 77: In the Day of Trouble, Remember God's Greatness
- Psalm 78: Lessons From Israel's History
- Psalm 79: A Plea for the Lord to Remember the Sheep of His Pasture
- Psalm 80: Israel's Plea for God's Mercy
- Psalm 81: A Plea for Israel to Listen to the Lord
- Psalm 82: Unjust Judges Rebuked
- Psalm 83: Prayer for Judgment on Israel's Enemies
- Psalm 84: A Deep Longing for the Presence of God
- Psalm 85: Prayer for Revival
- Psalm 86: Prayer for Mercy on the Nation
- Psalm 87: The Joy of Living in Zion
- Psalm 88: A Prayer in the Darkness of Despair
- Psalm 89: Claiming God's Person and Promises in Affliction

***Book IV: Psalms 90-106***

- Psalm 90: Teach Us to Number Our Days
- Psalm 91: In the Shelter of the Most High
- Psalm 92: In Praise of the Lord
- Psalm 93: *Yahweh* Reigns Gloriously
- Psalm 94: *Yahweh* Is the Judge of the Earth: Vengeance is His
- Psalm 95: Let Us Kneel Before Our Maker: a Call to Worship
- Psalm 96: Worship the Lord Who Will Judge the World in Righteousness
- Psalm 97: Rejoice! The Lord Reigns
- Psalm 98: Sing a New Song to the Lord
- Psalm 99: Exalt the Lord Who Reigns
- Psalm 100: Serve the Lord With Gladness: He is the Lord and He is Good
- Psalm 101: Commitment to a Holy Life
- Psalm 102: Prayer of a Saint Who is Overwhelmed
- Psalm 103: Bless the Lord: His Compassions Never Fail!
- Psalm 104: The Lord's Care Over All Creation
- Psalm 105: The Lord's Faithful Acts in Salvation History
- Psalm 106: A Remembrance of *Yahweh's* Love and Israel's Disobedience

***Book V: Psalms 107-150***

- Psalm 107: Praise for God's Deliverance from Manifold Troubles
- Psalm 108: Praise and Prayer for Victory
- Psalm 109: A Imprecatory Prayer for Vindication and Judgments Against Enemies
- Psalm 110: Messiah Pictured as the Priest King Warrior
- Psalm 111: Celebration of God's Faithfulness
- Psalm 112: The Triumph of Faith
- Psalm 113: Praise to the Exalted Lord Who Condescends to the Lowly
- Psalm 114: Praise for the Exodus
- Psalm 115: The Impotence of Idols and the Greatness of the Lord
- Psalm 116: Praise to the Lord for Deliverance
- Psalm 117: The Praise of All People
- Psalm 118: Praise for the Lord's Saving Goodness
- Psalm 119: In Praise of the Scriptures
- Psalm 120: Prayer for Deliverance from Slanderers
- Psalm 121: The Lord is My Guardian
- Psalm 122: Pray for the Peace of Jerusalem!
- Psalm 123: Plea for Mercy
- Psalm 124: Our Helper is the Maker of Heaven and Earth!
- Psalm 125: Peace Be on Israel
- Psalm 126: Praise for Restoration!
- Psalm 127: Praise for Children, a Gift from the Lord
- Psalm 128: The Family Blessed by the Lord
- Psalm 129: The Prayer of the Persecuted
- Psalm 130: Waiting for God's Redemption
- Psalm 131: Childlike Trust in the Lord
- Psalm 132: Prayer for the Lord's Blessing on Zion
- Psalm 133: The Blessedness of Brotherly Unity
- Psalm 134: Praise to the Lord in the Night
- Psalm 135: Praise for the Wondrous Works of God
- Psalm 136: Praise for God's Mercy Which Endures Forever
- Psalm 137: Tears Over Captivity
- Psalm 138: The Lord Answers Prayer and Delivers the Humble
- Psalm 139: The Lord Knows Me!
- Psalm 140: Prayer for Deliverance: You Are My God!
- Psalm 141: May My Prayer Be Like Incense!
- Psalm 142: No One Cared but the Lord; He Alone Is My Portion
- Psalm 143: Prayer for Guidance; Lead Me on Level Ground
- Psalm 144: The Lord is My Rock and My Warrior
- Psalm 145: Praise for the Lord's Greatness and Wonderful Works
- Psalm 146: Praise to the Lord, an Abundant Helper
- Psalm 147: Praise to the Lord Who Heals the Brokenhearted
- Psalm 148: Praise to the Lord, the Wise Creator
- Psalm 149: Praise to the Lord Who Delights in His People
- Psalm 150: Praise to the Lord



## PROVERBS (Wisdom Through Precept)

### Author:

According to 1 Kings 4:32, Solomon spoke 3,000 proverbs and 1,005 songs. And while he wrote most of proverbs in this book, later chapters indicate that he was not the only author of the book. Three sections of the proverbs are ascribed to Solomon; chapters 1:1-9:18; 10:1-22:16, and 25:1-29:27. However, the proverbs in the latter section (25:1-29:27) were selected from Solomon's collection by King Hezekiah's committee (25:1). Proverbs 22:17 refers to the "sayings of the wise," and 24:23 mentions additional "sayings of the wise." Proverbs 22:17-21 serves as an introduction which suggests that these sections stem from a circle of wise men, not from Solomon himself. Chapter 30 is specifically attributed to Agur, son of Jakeh, and 31:1-9 to King Lemuel. Lemuel's sayings contain several Aramaic spellings that point to a non-Israelite background.

### Date:

950-700 B.C.

As a book of wisdom, Proverbs is not an historical book but rather the product of the school of wisdom in Israel. Solomon's proverbs were written before his death in 931 B.C., and those collected by Hezekiah's scribes probably around 700 B.C.

### Title of the Book:

Proverbs obviously gets its name from its contents—short sayings or maxims that convey truth in a pointed and pithy way. The Hebrew word for *proverb* (from *ma„sEa„l*, "to be like, represent") means "parallel," "similar," or "a comparison." It refers to a comparison or simile as underlying the moral maxim. As a pithy saying, a proverb centers in a comparison or an antithesis. The title comes from the fact this writing is a compendium of moral and spiritual instruction designed to enable one to live wisely.

### Theme and Purpose:

As suggested by the title and the meaning of the term *proverb*, the theme and purpose of the book is wisdom for living through special instruction on every conceivable issue of life: folly, sin, goodness, wealth, poverty, the tongue, pride, humility, justice, family (parents, children, discipline), vengeance, strife, gluttony, love, laziness, friends, life, and death. No book is more practical in terms of wisdom for daily living than Proverbs.

The fundamental theme is "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge" (1:7a). The absence of a fear of God leads to an unbridled and foolish life. To fear the Lord is to stand in awe of His holy character and power. At the same time, Proverbs shows that true wisdom leads to the fear of the Lord (2:1-5).

### Key Words:

The key word is "wisdom," "wise," etc., occurring some 110 times. Also important and related to wisdom are the terms, "instruction" and "taught, teach," together occurring some 23 times.

### Key Verses:

**1:5-7** A wise man will hear and increase in learning, And a man of understanding will acquire wise counsel, To understand a proverb and a figure, The words of the

wise and their riddles. The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge; Fools despise wisdom and instruction.

**3:5-6** Trust in the LORD with all your heart, And do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He will make your paths straight. Do not be wise in your own eyes; Fear the LORD and turn away from evil.

**9:10** The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, And the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.

### Key Chapters:

There are obviously many sections of proverbs that might be considered as key such as **chapter 1:20-33** where wisdom is personified as a woman inviting all to come to her and learn, but the majority refuse to heed her appeal, but perhaps **chapter 31** gets the honors as the key chapter.

The last chapter of Proverbs is unique in ancient literature, as it reveals a very high and noble view of women. The woman in these verses is: (1) A good woman (31:13, 15-16, 19, 25); (2) a good wife (31:11-12, 23-24); (3) a good mother (31:14-15, 18, 21, 27); and (4) a good neighbor (31:11-12, 23-24). Her conduct, concern, speech, and life stand in sharp contrast to the woman pictured in chapter 7.<sup>40</sup>

### Christ as seen in Proverbs:

In chapter 8, wisdom is personified and seen in its perfection. It is divine (8:22-31), it is the source of biological and spiritual life (3:18; 8:35-36), it is righteous and moral (8:8-9), and it is available to all who will receive it (8:1-6, 32-35). This wisdom became incarnate in Christ "in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Col. 2:3). "But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God—and righteousness and sanctification and redemption" (1 Cor. 1:30; cf. 1 Cor. 1:22-24).<sup>41</sup>

### Outline:

- I. Introduction: the Purpose of Proverbs (1:1-7)
- II. The Precepts of Wisdom: Proverbs to Youth (1:8-9:18)
  - A. Obey Parents (1:8-9)
  - B. Avoid Bad Company (1:10-19)
  - C. Heed Wisdom's Call and Advice (1:20-33)
  - D. Avoid the Adulteress (2:1-22)
  - E. Trust and Honor God (3:1-12)
  - F. The Blessings of Wisdom (3:13-20)
  - G. Be Kind and Generous to Others (3:21-35)
  - H. Get Wisdom (4:1-9)
  - I. Avoid Bad Company (4:10-19)
  - J. Above All, Keep Your Heart (4:20-27)
  - K. Do Not Commit Adultery (5:1-14)
  - L. Be Faithful to Your Own Spouse (5:15-23)

<sup>40</sup> Wilkinson and Boa, p. 164.

<sup>41</sup> Wilkinson and Boa, p. 164.

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- M. Avoid Surety (6:1-5)
- N. Shun Laziness (6:6-19)
- O. Avoid Adultery (6:20-35)
- P. Avoid the Adulteress (7:1-27)
- Q. Wisdom and Folly Contrasted (8:1-9:18)
- III. The Proverbs of Solomon (10:1-24:34)
  - A. Proverbs Contrasting the Godly and the Wicked (10:1-15:33)
  - B. Proverbs Encouraging Godly Lives (16:1-22:6)
  - C. Proverbs Concerning Various Practices (22:17-23:35)
  - D. Proverbs Concerning Various People (24:1-34)
- IV. The Proverbs of Solomon Copied by Hezekiah's Men (25:1-29:27)
  - A. Proverbs Concerning Relationships with Others (25:1-26:28)
    - 1. With kings (25:1-7)
    - 2. With neighbors (25:8-20)
    - 3. With enemies (25:21-24)
    - 4. With yourself (25:25-26:2)
    - 5. With fools (26:3-12)
    - 6. With sluggards (26:13-16)
    - 7. With gossips (26:17-28)
  - B. Proverbs Concerning Actions (27:1-29:27)
    - 1. In relation to life (27:1-27)
    - 2. In relation to law (28:1-10)
    - 3. In relation to wealth (28:11-28)
    - 4. In relation to stubbornness (29:1-27)
- V. The Words of Agur (30:1-33)
  - A. Personal Words (30:1-14)
  - B. Numerical Proverbs (30:15-33)
- VI. The Words of Lemuel (31:1-9)
- VII. The Capable Wife (31:10-31)

## ECCLESIASTES (A Search For Purpose)

### Author:

There are two lines of evidence (external and internal) that point to Solomon as the author of Ecclesiastes. For the external evidence, the Jewish tradition attributes the book to Solomon. Internally, a number of lines of evidence show that Solomon was surely the author. First, the author identifies himself as "the son of David, king in Jerusalem" (1:1). Then, references in the book to the author's unrivaled wisdom (1:16), extreme wealth (2:7), opportunities for pleasure (2:3), and extensive building activities (2:4-6) all suggest Solomon as the author. There is simply no other descendant of David who measured up to these descriptions.

### Date:

931 B.C.

According to Jewish tradition, Solomon wrote the Song in his early years, expressing a young man's love. He wrote the Proverbs in his mature years, manifesting a middle-aged man's wisdom. He reportedly wrote Ecclesiastes in his declining years, revealing an old man's sorrow (cf. 12:1). Perhaps Ecclesiastes is the record of

Solomon's regret for and repentance from his grave moral lapses recorded in 1 Kings 11. The Book of Ecclesiastes, then, would have been written just before Solomon's death and subsequent division of his kingdom that occurred in 931 B.C.<sup>42</sup>

### **Title of the Book:**

The name Ecclesiastes stems from the title given in the Greek translation, the Septuagint. Greek term, *ecclesiastes*, means "assembly" and is derived from the word *ekkle,sia*, "assembly, church." "The Hebrew title is Qoheleth, which means "one who convenes and speaks at an assembly," or "an ecclesiastic" or "preacher."

### **Theme and Purpose:**

The basic theme is the futility of life apart from God. In the development of this theme, four key purposes emerge.

First, in seeking to demonstrate that life without God has no meaning, Solomon is seeking to demolish confidence in man-based achievements and wisdom; he shows that all of man's goals or the "way that seems right to man" must of necessity lead to dissatisfaction and emptiness." Solomon recorded the futility and emptiness of his own experiences to make his readers desperate for God. He sought to show that their quest for happiness cannot be fulfilled by man himself in the pursuits of this life.

Second, Solomon affirms the fact that much in life cannot be fully understood, which means we must live by faith, not by sight. Life is full of unexplained enigmas, unresolved anomalies, and uncorrected injustices. There is much in life that man cannot comprehend nor control, but by faith, we can rest in the sovereign wisdom and work of God. Much like the Book of Job, Ecclesiastes not only affirms that man is finite, but that he must learn to live with mystery. Life down here on earth, "life under the sun," cannot provide the key to life itself for our world fallen, bankrupt. In view of this, man must have more than a horizontal outlook; he must have the upward look to God, fearing and trusting Him. Enigmas and injustices must be left in His hands to resolve.

Third, Ecclesiastes presents a realistic view of life that counterbalances the optimism of Proverbs. It shows there are exceptions to the laws and promises of proverbs, at least from the standpoint of this life. Proverbs 10:16 affirms that justice is meted to the righteous and the wicked, but Ecclesiastes 8:14 observes that this is not always the case, at least not in this life. Are these contradictions? No, because Proverbs is noting the general laws of God without noting the exceptions that occur because we live in a fallen, sin-ridden world. Ecclesiastes points out that while a righteous order exists, as affirmed in Proverbs, it is not always evident to man as he views life "under the sun" from his finite perspective.

Fourth, Solomon showed that man, left to his own strategies will always find life empty, frustrating, and mysterious. The book, however, does not mean that life has no answers, that life is totally useless or meaningless. Meaning and significance can be found, he explained, in fearing God. Frustrations can thus be replaced with contentment through fellowship with God.

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<sup>42</sup> Geisler, p. 214.

**Key Word: Vanity**

**Key Verses:**

**1:2** "Vanity of vanities," says the Preacher, "Vanity of vanities! All is vanity."

**2:24** There is nothing better for a man *than* to eat and drink and tell himself that his labor is good. This also I have seen, that it is from the hand of God.

**12:13-14** The conclusion, when all has been heard, *is*: fear God and keep His commandments, because this *applies to* every person. 14 For God will bring every act to judgment, everything which is hidden, whether it is good or evil.

**Key Chapter:**

At the end of Ecclesiastes, the Preacher looks at life through "binoculars." On the other hand, from the perspective of the natural man who only sees life "under the sun," the conclusion is, "all is vanity." Life's every activity, even though pleasant for the moment, becomes purposeless and futile when viewed as an end in itself.

The preacher carefully documents the latter view with a long list of his own personal pursuits in life. No amount of activities or possessions has satisfied the craving of his heart. Every earthly prescription for happiness has left the same bitter aftertaste. Only when the Preacher views his life from God's perspective "above the sun" does it take on meaning as a precious gift "from the hand of God" (2:24).

Chapter 12 resolves the book's extensive inquiry into the meaning of life with the single conclusion, "Fear God and Keep His commandments, for this is the whole duty of man" (12:13).<sup>43</sup>

**Christ as seen in Ecclesiastes:**

Since Christ alone is man's means to God where man finds wholeness and satisfaction, or life and life more abundantly (John 10:10; 7:37-38), the futility and perplexity experienced in life can only be removed through a personal relationship with the Lord Jesus. Man's aspiration for significance and satisfaction are found only in the Savior.

**Outline:<sup>44</sup>**

- I. Introduction: The Problem Stated (1:1-3)
  - A. The Problem Demonstrated (1:4-2:26)
    - 1. The Futility of the Cycles of Life (1:4-11)
    - 2. The Futility of Human Wisdom (1:12-18)
    - 3. The Futility of Pleasure and Wealth (2:1-11)
    - 4. The Futility of Materialism (2:12-23)
    - 5. Conclusion: Enjoy and Be Content with the Providences of God (2:24-26)
- II. God's Immutable Plan for Life (3:1-22)
  - A. He Predetermines the Events of Life (3:1-11)
  - B. He Predetermines the Conditions of Life (3:12-13)

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<sup>43</sup> Wilkinson and Boa, pp. 170-171.

<sup>44</sup> Adapted from *The Ryrie Study Bible*, pp. 1016-1017.

- C. He Judges All (3:14-21)
- D. Conclusion (3:22)
- III. The Futility of the Circumstances of Life (4:1-5:20)
  - A. Evil Oppression (4:1-3)
  - B. The Emptiness of Hard Work (4:4-12)
  - C. The Emptiness of Political Success (4:13-16)
  - D. The Emptiness of Human Religion (5:1-7)
  - E. The Emptiness of Human Riches (5:8-17)
  - F. Conclusion (5:18-20)
- IV. The Futility of Life as a Whole (6:1-1)
  - A. Wealth Cannot Satisfy (6:1-2)
  - B. Children Cannot Satisfy (6:3-6)
  - C. Labor Cannot Satisfy (6:7-12)
- V. Counsel for Living With Vanity (7:1-12:8)
  - A. Counsel in View of Man's Wickedness (7:1-29)
  - B. Counsel in View of God's Inscrutable Providences (8:1-9:18)
  - C. Counsel in View of the Uncertainties of Life (10:1-20)
  - D. Counsel in View of the Aging Processes of Life (11:1-12:8)
- VI. Conclusion (12:9-14)

## **SONG OF SOLOMON (A Royal Wedding)**

### **Author:**

Though some critics reject King Solomon as the author and take 1:1 to mean, "which is about Solomon," the internal evidence supports the traditional belief that Solomon is its author. The contents of the book agree with all that we know about the abilities and wisdom of Solomon, and there is no compelling reason not to regard him as the author.<sup>45</sup> Solomon is mentioned seven times (1:1, 5; 3:7, 9, 11; 8:11-12), and he is identified as the groom. Verse 1 asserts that Solomon wrote this song as one of many (in fact the best of the many) songs which he wrote (1 Kings 4:32 tells us he composed 1,005 such songs). Note that the text does not simply say, "The Song of Solomon" but "The Song of Songs, which are Solomon's."

### **Date:**

About 965 B.C.

The Song was probably written early in Solomon's career, about 965. At this point, Solomon had sixty queens and eighty concubines (6:8), but later in his life, he would have seven hundred queens and three thousand concubines (1 Kings 11:3).

### **Title of the Book:**

Regarding the title of this book Ryrie writes:

This book has been titled several ways: the Hebrew title from verse 1, The Song of Songs, which means "the most superlative, or best, of songs"; the English title, also

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<sup>45</sup> Ryrie, p. 1032.



from verse 1, The Song of Solomon, which designates the author; and the Canticles, meaning simply "songs," derived from the Latin.<sup>46</sup>

### Theme and Purpose:

The Song of Solomon is a love song filled with metaphors and imagery designed to portray God's view of love and marriage: the beauty of physical love between man and woman. The book which is presented as a drama with several scenes, has three major player: the bride (Shulamite), the king (Solomon), and a chorus (daughters of Jerusalem). The purpose of the book will depend on the viewpoint taken as to the way the book should be interpreted. The following will illustrate this in the discussion of the three views presented here.

In summary, there have been three basic views on the interpretation of this Song of Solomon.

(1) **Purely an Allegory:** Some have regarded it only an allegory portraying fictional characters employed teach the truth of God's love for His people. Regarding this view, Archer writes:

The allegorical interpretation prevailed from ancient times until the rise of modern scholarship. It identified Solomon with Jehovah (or else, according to the Christians, with Christ) and the Shulamite as Israel (or the Church). The historicity of Solomon's love affair is of small importance to the exponents of this theory. They tend to interpret each detail in a symbolic manner; thus Solomon's eighty concubines, according to some, represent the eighty heresies destined to plague the Church...

It must be admitted that these passages establish at least a typical relationship between human love and marriage and the covenant relationship between God and His people. Nevertheless, the allegorical view faces certain difficulties, not the least of which is that the book seems to speak of a historical episode in Solomon's life and accords well with Solomon's situation, at least in the earlier part of his reign (judging from the comparatively small number of his concubines).<sup>47</sup>

(2) **The Literal View:** Others regard the Song as simply a secular love song not intended to convey a spiritual lesson and expressing human love in a highly romantic way drawn from an historical event in the life of Solomon.

(3) **The Literal/Typical View:** This view sees a combination a literal historical event portraying the beauties of physical love along with a typical portrait of God's Love and Christ's love for the church.

Others rightly understand the book to be an historical record of the romance of Solomon with a Shulamite woman. The "snapshots" in the book portray the joys of love in courtship and marriage and counteract both the extremes of asceticism and of lust. The rightful place of physical love, within marriage only, is clearly established and honored. Within the historical framework, some also see illustrations of the love of God (and Christ) for His people. Obviously Solomon does not furnish the best example of marital devotion, for he had many wives and concubines (140 at this time, 6:8; many more later, 1 Kings 11:3). The experiences recorded in this book may reflect the only (or virtually the only) pure romance he had.<sup>48</sup>

This combined perspective is seen in Archers explanation of the theme of Canticles:

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<sup>46</sup> Ryrie, p. 1032.

<sup>47</sup> Archer, Electronic Media.

<sup>48</sup> Ryrie, p. 1032.

The theme of Canticles is the love of Solomon for his Shulamite bride and her deep affection for him. This love affair is understood to typify the warm, personal relationship which God desires with His spiritual bride, composed of all redeemed believers who have given their hearts to Him. From the Christian perspective, this points to the mutual commitment between Christ and His church and the fullness of fellowship which ought to subsist between them.<sup>49</sup>

**Key Word: Love**

**Key Verses: 7:10 "I am my beloved's, And his desire is for me.**

**Key People:**

The book has three major player: the bride (Shulamite), the king (Solomon), and a chorus (daughters of Jerusalem).

**Christ as seen in the Song of Solomon:**

This book illustrates Christ's love for the church which is seen as the bride of Christ in the New Testament (cf. 2 Cor. 11:2; Eph. 5:23-25; Rev. 19:7-9; 21:9).

**Outline:**

- I. Title (1:1)
- II. Falling in Love (1:2-3:5)
- III. United in Love (3:6-5:1)
- IV. Struggling in Love (5:2-7:10)
- V. Maturing in Love (7:11-8:14)

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<sup>49</sup> Archer, Electronic Media.